

OPPOSITIONAL GAZE ON HOME AND DOMESTICITY IN THE SELECTED FICTION OF NAZAR SAJJAD HYDER AND ISMAT CHUGHTAI

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ABSTRACT

This essay examines the contested discourse of "home" in colonial India by tracing its critical reimagining in the fiction of Urdu-speaking female Muslim writers. It focuses on short stories by Nazar Sajjad Hyder and Ismat Chughtai, situating their work within the ideological framework of Victorian domesticity, colonial modernity, and indigenous reformism, which collectively idealized the home as a moral and private sphere. In opposition to this normative construction, women writers developed a counter-narrative that exposes the home as a site of material deprivation, gendered violence, and class exploitation, particularly for the women of the household and female domestic servants. The essay demonstrates that fiction served as a crucial medium for critiquing the duplicity of the nationalist, reformist, and patriarchal authority. Drawing on the feminist theory of standpoint epistemology, especially Bell Hooks's concept of "homeplace," and the oppositional gaze, the analysis contends that these authors exposed the darker side of dwelling.

Keywords: Urdu Fiction, Muslim Women's Writings, Homeplace, Gendered Poverty and Violence, Domesticity in Late Colonial India

"The house of fiction isn't...only a metaphor containment. It's a reminder that fiction isn't placeless." Sage Lorana, *Women in the House of Fiction: Post-War Women Novelists*, Routledge, New York, 1992 (Preface ix).

This essay explores the concept of 'home' and "homeplace" in the fiction of Urdu-speaking Muslim women in the late colonial period in India. I chose two short stories by Nazar Sajjad Hyder and Ismat Chughtai to represent the shared gynocentric consciousness. By the 19th century, the idea of domesticity and the ideal depiction of domestic life had become a common theme in the modern literary world in Britain and colonial India. The interaction between the metropole and its colony resulted in the new ideological construction along the contours of Victorian morality. The 'domestic' became a contested site of triadic influence among Colonialists, Nativists (Modernists-Reformists, Traditionalists) and the Feminists.

In the United Provinces and Punjab, the Ashraf class, especially under the influence of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, gradually became the new collaborators of the Crown. Hence, the upper-class households gradually started adopting Victorian morality and Britain's bourgeois domesticity and moulded accordingly. This normative shift was reflected in the print sphere as well. Domestic literature emerged as one of the most popular and widely accepted genres,

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